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Ministry of  
Natural  
Resources

Hon. Vincent G. Kerrio  
Minister  
Mary Magford  
Deputy Minister

# partners

CWIP / Community Wildlife Involvement Program

WINTER '87

## A message from the Honourable Vincent Kerrio Minister of Natural Resources

Our Community Wildlife Involvement Program, or CWIP is off to a fine start, after just 20 months.

Clearly, our program has a promising future.

I am happy to report that we have committed \$240,000 to more than 220 wildlife-related projects which are already showing some tremendous results.

People working on CWIP projects have improved more than 480 hectares of wildlife habitat, constructed, erected and are maintaining over 8,000 bird nest-

ing boxes, and built structures for raising 800 pheasants a year.

More than 10,000 members of the public pitched in with 95,000 hours of work on CWIP projects, working co-operatively with my ministry as PWMS - Partners in Wildlife Management.

The projects involved sportsmen's clubs, naturalists' groups, cottagers' and community associations, landowners, trappers, agencies for the handicapped, students, 4-H clubs, girl guides and boy scouts.



This wide spectrum of PWMS clearly shows how important wildlife is to us all. In this first CWIP newsletter, there is a list of PWMS and their projects - a mirror of who we are and what we're doing together.

Each Ministry of Natural Resources district office has a copy of the new CWIP Field Manual, containing tips on ways to enhance habitat for many wildlife species. District CWIP representatives are ready to discuss ideas and guide new PWMS through the manual.

CWIP is under way and gaining momentum as more people discover how easy and rewarding it is to get involved in preserving and enhancing our wildlife heritage.

I look forward to your continued support as our program matures.

Vincent Kerrio

## Introducing Partners, the CWIP Newsletter

Since its inception in June, 1985 CWIP has been reaching out across the province, helping concerned members of the public develop and undertake small and large-scale projects to improve our wildlife resource.

This is the first issue of PARTNERS, which will have one

summer and one winter edition each year. Each edition will have articles on interesting CWIP projects, a list of new CWIP projects under way, updates regarding program directions, and information items on various wildlife enhancement techniques. Please retain each issue of PARTNERS

since future issues will elaborate on past articles.

We at MNR hope you enjoy reading PARTNERS. If you have any questions about featured articles or if you would like to help us develop an article on your own CWIP project, please contact: Christopher Horwath, Editor and CWIP Coordinator, Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch, Whitney Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3 (416) 965-7641

## Problems CWIP will help us address

CWIP began in June, 1985 and was developed in response to the following three problems affecting wildlife and wildlife management in Ontario.

### 1. Loss of Wildlife Habitat

This is the single most important factor affecting wildlife, especially in southern Ontario. Here, we are rapidly losing many of the features that signify good wildlife habitat - wetlands, woodlands, old fields and hedgerows. For example, more than 80 per cent of southern Ontario's original wetlands have already been either destroyed or seriously altered, and forested areas have been reduced to about 20 per cent coverage as land has been cleared for development.

### 2. Misconceptions and Lack of

### Awareness About the Needs and Management of Ontario's Wildlife Resource

As more people adopt urban lifestyles and lose day-to-day contact with wildlife, misconceptions about it become more widespread. Through a combination of lack of direct contact with wildlife and the spread of misleading information, many people are losing touch with the needs of wildlife and its importance to all of us.

### 3. Decreases in Recreational Opportunities Involving Wildlife in Southern Ontario

In southern Ontario, where nearly 85 per cent of Ontarians live, local

opportunities to enjoy and benefit from wildlife are in demand. But most of this land - 95 per cent - is privately owned. In such a heavily-populated area, demands on the wildlife resources and conflicts about land-use increase. At the same time, private landowners are becoming more reluctant to allow access to the wildlife resources on their properties. Some experts predict that if the present rate of posting against trespass continues, within 30 years we may witness the end of virtually all recreational access to private lands in southern Ontario.

## What CWIP offers

The CWIP concept is simple: members of the public contribute project ideas and volunteer labor, and MNR provides advice and the financial support to purchase necessary equipment and materials. Under CWIP, you can develop your own project and then assume the role of wildlife manager in carrying the projects through to completion. CWIP offers many benefits. It

will help us increase the variety and abundance of wildlife and it will help foster a commitment to the wildlife resource while increasing our knowledge and awareness of the resource. Also, through co-operative efforts between various interest groups and landowners, improved landowner relations can occur to help increase recreational access to private lands.

## How to get involved

Contact the CWIP representative at your local MNR district office to obtain program information and to discuss ideas. Then complete a CWIP project application form

and submit this to the district office. It takes about three weeks for most applications to be processed and for project funding to be made available.

## Project ideas

Generally speaking, projects should help achieve one of the following four program objectives. Examples of projects for each objective are provided.

1. To provide an increase in the variety, abundance and distribution of wildlife in the future through habitat management and enhancement, thereby increasing recreational opportunities, through volunteer projects such as:
  - collecting and stocking species (e.g., peregrine falcon) into suitable range and monitoring the success of such releases
  - constructing and maintaining deer feeders with PWMS providing the feed themselves
  - cutting browse and creating trails for deer in winter
  - constructing, erecting bird feeders and wildlife nesting or cover structures
  - creating and managing wildlife habitat - seeding roadsides, trails, and log landings, cutting and planting for food and cover
  - doing community-oriented backyard and ravine habitat projects in urban areas
  - growing wildlife shrubs for transplant to habitat project sites
2. To increase public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife resource, through pro-
- jects such as:
  - monitoring or censusing wildlife populations or select species, e.g., breeding birds, endangered or rare species, to provide useful information to both the general public and MNR
  - developing educational displays on wildlife for community events and schools
  - building wildlife-viewing towers and boardwalks, complete with interpretive signage, at sites open to the public
  - assisting in banding projects for songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors; and, assisting in round-ups where it is desirable to relocate problem groups of wildlife species
  - collecting user information required for wildlife management by operating or assisting in the operation of hunter check-stations or other information-collecting operations.
3. To help strengthen the relationship between private landowners and recreationists, through volunteer projects such as:
  - developing and implementing personalized habitat plans for interested landowners, that would benefit a variety of species in keeping with the landowners' objective for their lands (e.g., brushpiles, nest boxes, fence row management, edge cutting, food

plots, waterfowl structures)  
 • providing orchard protection through fencing against deer depredation from significant deer herds  
 • providing habitat protection  
 • installing small-scale water control structures to protect or enhance wetland areas  
 • removing nuisance animals such as raccoon, skunk and squirrel as free service to landowners  
 • planting trees, shrubs and crops to increase wildlife populations  
 • constructing hunter-education/wildlife-education trails and viewing areas on club properties and on participating-landowner properties.

**4. To provide an immediate increase in recreational opportunities, through volunteer projects such as**  
 • constructing pen-rearing facilities to produce selected game birds for release on suitable private and public land for hunting by the public.

## Project Funding

Any individual or group whose project conforms to the intent of the Community Wildlife Involvement Program is eligible for quick approval for funding requests up to \$2,000.

Projects exceeding \$2,000 will be ranked according to their benefit to the wildlife resource on a provincial scale. Those individuals or groups proposing such projects will usually be required to submit a proposal by December 31 of the year prior to the proposed start date. Except under extenuating circumstances, approval of such projects will be granted by April 1st of the year of implementation.

## partners

Published by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch.

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Printed in Ontario, Canada.

Single copies of this publication are available at no charge from the addresses noted below. Bulk orders may involve charges.

Current publications of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and price lists, are obtainable through the Ministry of Natural Resources Public Information Centre, Room 1640, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St. West, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W2 (personal shopping and mail orders).

And:

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Please address all inquiries and communications to:

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Editor,  
Ministry of Natural Resources,  
Wildlife Branch,  
Whitney Block, Queen's Park,  
Toronto.

# Oxford fish and game wins provincial award

The Oxford Fish and Game Protection Association of Woodstock has become the first club to be honored by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for community involvement on behalf of wildlife.

The club was chosen for the Minister of Natural Resources' Community Wildlife Involvement Program Award at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters 58th annual Wildlife Conference in Toronto. The CWIP award is designed to recognize groups or individuals whose involvement projects best reflect the basic principles of CWIP. Those principles are to improve wildlife habitat, improve landowner/recreationist relations and to improve public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife resource.

cularly on habitat problems."

"I hope to see another club or an individual from the OFAH win the award for 1986. It highlights the

fact that sportsmen work for conservation. And I welcome competition or co-operation from any other group that is interested. In the end, it's our wildlife that will benefit."

From a news release produced by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters ...



Tim Millard, Executive Coordinator of the Outdoor Recreation Group, Ministry of Natural Resources, presents the CWIP award to Doug Bender, past president of the Oxford Fish and Game Protection Association.

## Revitalizing stale beaver ponds for waterfowl in Carleton Place District.

Fred Girdwood of the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club noticed that two old ponds in his area were getting too stale to provide the kind of vegetation needed for waterfowl nesting. Ducks stopped using the ponds because of this, so Fred and his club used CWIP funds to build and install special beaver-proof water level control devices which Fred designed. These devices allow the ponds to be drained for several months. This aerates the bottom and encourages re-vegetation once the area is reflooded. The devices can then be used to regulate the water level to prevent beavers from flooding nearby deer yard areas and township roads.

One of the two-hectare ponds was revitalized in time for this nesting season and three pairs of ducks used the re-vegetated site to raise broods. A good start, and the club expects that with the help of a few CWIP sponsored nest boxes, their two ponds will soon provide sufficient habitat to support ten broods annually.

"The bulk of this area depends on small beaver ponds to provide

waterfowl nesting. What's needed is more projects like ours that revitalize old ponds," said Fred.

As a follow-up to their project, the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club held a workshop explaining project techniques to over twenty-five interested individuals. In future, the club plans to erect interpretive signage so their project site can be used to demonstrate rehabilitation principles.

According to local Ministry of Natural Resources Management Officer Hans Von Rosen, "Small pond projects such as these can add up to have a very positive effect on area waterfowl and muskrat numbers."

Fred Girdwood's club has also received CWIP approval to undertake two more waterfowl projects. One project is similar to the one just completed and will include construction and placement of waterfowl nesting platforms and wood duck nesting boxes. The club expects this project will create new hunting areas as well as reduce the potential of beavers flooding a nearby township road.

The other project involves working with a landowner and Ducks Unlimited to create a waterfowl staging area that will support approximately 1,000 Canada geese. Once Ducks Unlimited has completed installation of water-control structures, the club will use CWIP funds to build and install waterfowl nest boxes and platforms. When water levels permit, the landowner plans to contribute his time and equipment to prepare the site for hand seeding of wheat in order to provide food for the geese in spring.

The landowner, Jack McClure comments, "I enjoy helping wildlife and working with the Arnprior Club on this project, and am looking forward to the arrival of the Canada geese to our new staging area. I hope I don't have to count all of them — that's a project in itself!"

CWIP would like to thank the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club and the landowners that support their efforts to enhance wildlife. Much progress is being made thanks to the spirit of co-operation held by everyone.



Member of the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club draining stale pond to install water level control device.

## Adults helping kids help wildlife

Thanks to the work of a group of dedicated individuals in Kincardine, the local waterfowl population is expected to increase in the coming years. The group, led by Guy Anderson, has initiated an ambitious long term project to manage the Kincardine sewage lagoon as a wildlife propagation and recreation area.

For years Guy had known that waterfowl nested on the banks of the lagoon and he wondered whether something could be done to reduce predation on the ducklings and also increase the use of the area by wildlife. In the late 1970s he contacted the Ministry of Natural Resources, Owen Sound District, and ministry staff provided Guy with the ideas of building nesting rafts, wood duck boxes and planting shrubs for food and cover. At that time both Guy and the MNR had the right idea but there was no funding available to implement the ideas.



Local school kids helping the Lagoon Site Wildlife Management Area Committee plant wildlife food and cover vegetation.

The initiating of the CWIP program provided the means to pay for materials and the incentive for a committee to be formed.

The committee approached the town about having the site designated as a wildlife management area and to obtain permission to do the work. The Owen Sound District was contacted and the initial projects were set up. This spring the committee built and put up six wood duck nesting boxes, 14 floating nesting rafts and two observation buildings. As the work continued, interest in the community began to snowball, with even the entire Elgin Market Public School offering to help. Blake Smith of the Owen Sound office was able to obtain 4,000 highbush cranberry and autumn olive trees which 250 school children enthusiastically planted.

The results so far have been promising. This summer there were eight broods of mallards,

two of teal and one brood of wood ducks raised on the lagoon. The plants have done well and will soon be providing a natural source of food.

The outlook for the future looks even better. The ministry's new CWIP representative in Owen Sound, Les Standiford, is working with the committee and the Elgin Market Public School to develop long term plans for the area. Work will include building more nesting rafts, planting both white cedar and spruce trees, building a trail system around the site and putting up a corridor of bluebird houses.

As Guy Anderson put it, the objective is to create a natural wilderness area where people can go to see wildlife and feel a sense of community pride for the work done.

Hats off to the town of Kincardine and all those involved with this important project.

# CWIP welcomes individuals

## Building for Bluebirds

Art Briggs-Jude helps bluebirds in a big way. Not only does he monitor and maintain over 100 nest boxes in MNR's Brockville District, but he also volunteers his time to give talks on bluebirds and to assemble and distribute bluebird information packages, which encourage other interested people to help this harbinger of spring.

Art first heard that bluebirds were in trouble in 1938 when, during a local game and fish club meeting, a member pointed out that starlings were taking over many nesting cavities that had been traditionally used by bluebirds. Art recounts that "The thought that in that group of hunters and fishermen there was a concern for bluebirds, remained with me."

He started building and erecting nest boxes in 1958, his interest and enthusiasm eventually leading him to the point where he wanted to get others involved in this worthwhile pastime.

In 1985, he began his own Blue Birds program, which is aimed at encouraging countryside churches to build and maintain a few nest boxes in the surrounding grassed area. Since most rural church yards are comprised of grassed area with nearby hedgerows – ideal bluebird habitat – his program immediately took hold.

nesting that same spring), once again in October when the birds have gone south, and in mid-March before they have returned from the south. Art's package on bluebirds is free, and can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Art Briggs-Jude, c/o Bluebird Acres, Westport, Ontario K0G 1X0.

Best regards Art, and good luck with your Blue Bells program!

## Helping Wood Ducks in Tweed District

Since 1978, Michael Biro has been building, erecting, and meticulously monitoring wood duck nest boxes on his family's forest property in MNR's Tweed District in eastern Ontario.

A great love for nature and for being outdoors has him devoting many hours to the twenty-six nest boxes under his care.

Through CWIP, Michael was able to enhance his operation by obtaining such things as banding equipment, and metal to construct predator guard devices for nestling ducks being harassed by raccoons.

Michael has been extremely successful in his efforts, with wood ducks laying 250 eggs in 20 of his 26 structures this past spring. This is tremendous, considering that before his assistance the area supported an average of

# Clover seeding in Algonquin Park District

With the help of MNR Fish and Wildlife Technician George Oram, Phil Morlock of Whitney, Ontario developed a CWIP project to enhance local wildlife populations by planting several barren log landings with clover. According to Phil, "This is very worthwhile since our area lacks the kind of sunlit forest openings needed to provide early spring vegetation for species such as grouse and deer."

Along with providing food in early spring, clover helps increase soil fertility by adding nitrogen. This in turn promotes the establishment of larger plant species which provide cover as well as food.

Phil and his group of Partners in Wildlife Management (PWMS) expect to work with MNR on more projects in the near future.

According to Phil, "CWIP is a great concept. I am originally from Ohio with a background in wildlife management, and I believe this

program is a very progressive step that has unlimited potential in Ontario." MNR thanks you for the compliment Phil, and wishes you continued success with CWIP.

Clover seeding projects are becoming especially popular in parts of northern Ontario where forestry operations create clearings in the woods. Even in areas that lack

forestry operations, PWMS are finding spots where clover can take hold. For example, in Kirkland Lake District, members of the Kirkland Lake Trappers Council are seeding clover on river banks and on the sides of old roadways. This just goes to show that a little imagination along with some clover goes a long way!



Phil Morlock of Hay Lake Lodge spreading clover to enhance wildlife.

## TREES AND SHRUBS SUITED TO SELECT WILDLIFE SPECIES

TREE/SHRUB SPECIES	WILDLIFE SPECIES	Bear	Buzzard/gull	Chimpanzee	Coati/nutria	European hare	Ring-necked pheasant	Raccoon	Ruffed grouse	Sharp-shinned hawk	Snowshoe hare	Sparrowhawk	Whitetailed deer	Woodcock
American elder														
A. high-bush cranberry														
A. mountain-ash		*												
Autumn-olive														
Common juniper														
Creeping juniper														
Eastern hemlock														
E. red cedar														
E. white pine														
Hawthorn														
Juneberry														
Mugo pine														
Multiflora rose														
Nannyberry														
Red maple														
R. oak														
R.-osier dogwood		*												
R. pine														
Russian-olive														
Staghorn sumac														
Sugar maple														
Tatarian honeysuckle														
Trembling aspen		*												
White ash														
W. birch														
W. cedar														
W. spruce														



Art used CWIP funds in 1986 to print copies of his information package, and has had such a terrific response that he believes he'll soon be out of copies. Part of the information package contains instructions on how to properly maintain the boxes. This is important since without proper maintenance, a nest box can become a death trap for bluebirds. According to Art, boxes should be cleaned out after each family of young learned to fly (to encourage

encourages the female wood duck to renest and hatch another set of eggs that same spring. Another important point is that boxes should be spaced approximately 100 metres apart, to prevent ducks from becoming confused and laying eggs in each other's nests.

The project is so successful that Anne Hendrick – Ministry of Natural Resources CWIP Advisor for Eastern Region – uses it to help rate the potential of other sites where PWMS wish to undertake wood duck projects under CWIP. According to Michael Biro, "Where you already have beavers and pileated woodpeckers, you're sure to have habitat conditions suitable for wood ducks." That covers quite a large part of Ontario, and it means that many more opportunities exist to help wood ducks for members of the public wishing to get involved in CWIP as Partners in Wildlife Management (PWMS).

Michael emphasizes that it is important to properly maintain the boxes, cleaning them out during fall or winter, and installing six inches of wood shavings. Cleaning out the boxes as quickly as possible after the young leave the nest

## CWIP crests and identification cards available

The embroidered CWIP jacket crest shown below has been de-

veloped to represent CWIP. The three components of it: the helping hand; the bird; and the bush representing habitat, come together to symbolize 'hands on' public involvement to enhance Ontario's wildlife resource. Crests will be provided to project participants whose name and address appears on the Volunteer Agreement Form which must be completed and submitted to the local Ministry of Natural Resources district office upon project completion.



Later this year a small theme crest will also be offered to accompany the CWIP crest to provide Partners in Wildlife Management (PWMS) with yearly recognition. Since this year has been designated Wildlife '87 by the Federal Government celebrating 100 years of wildlife conservation in Canada, the CWIP theme crest will commemorate this event. For more information on Wildlife '87, refer to back of newsletter.

A major goal of CWIP is to enhance wildlife on private land through co-operative efforts

between outdoor recreationists and landowners. CWIP participants are encouraged to seek landowner permission to undertake appropriate projects that will enhance the wildlife resource and improve landowner-recreational relations.

To this end, wallet-sized CWIP Identification Cards are available which are intended to assist CWIP participants during their initial dealings with landowners. This card identifies the individual as a concerned PWM with the Ministry of Natural Resources. Cards must

be signed by the PWM and a Ministry representative, and can be left with landowners contacted under CWIP. To obtain cards, contact your local Ministry of Natural Resources District Office.





## Community Wildlife Involvement Program

## Making connections in 1988

What do hedgerows and handshakes have in common? Both are important connections that volunteers can make for wildlife through the Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP).

CWIP is a people program and a wildlife program, designed to connect the

labor and ideas of the public with the expertise and resources of MNR, all to benefit wildlife. Participation has steadily climbed since the program debut in 1985. 1987 was the biggest year yet with 170 wildlife projects. 5,000 CWIP Partners in Wildlife Management logged close to

50,000 hours of work for wildlife.

The groups and projects that are a part of the Community Wildlife Involvement Program are as varied as Ontario's wildlife habitat is diverse. *Partners* provides a project update to display these endeavors, and is a forum for practical ideas and news on volunteer wildlife management across the province. The newsletter is your guide to getting involved.

Handshakes are a common denominator to many CWIP projects, and can be as important as shovels or work boots. Wildlife and habitat benefit most when people work together — volunteer groups working with landowners, sportsmen working with naturalists, seniors working with students. The more handshakes the better.

Hedgerows are valuable habitat connections that can help conserve wildlife in Ontario's settled areas. A strip of vegetation along a field border is an important protective corridor for wildlife. It links woodlots and wetlands, and allows wildlife to move about the landscape more freely. Ecologically speaking, hedgerows also control soil erosion and act as windbreaks.



That is why CWIP has adopted the hedgerow as its mascot for 1988.

Symbolically, hedgerows also represent the bridges we must build between all groups interested in wildlife and the outdoors.

Look for more information on hedgerows in the next two issues of *Partners*.

### What is CWIP?

The Community Wildlife Involvement Program is a network of Ministry of Natural Resources personnel and the public, working together as partners in wildlife management. Individuals or groups provide the ideas and volunteer labor for wildlife projects, while the ministry contributes technical expertise and funding for equipment and materials. Any project that conforms to the intent of CWIP is eligible for quick approval for funding requests up to \$2,000, although larger projects will also be considered.

To be funded by CWIP, projects should:

1. Increase the variety, abundance or distribution of wildlife, thereby increasing recreational opportunities;
2. Increase public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife; or,
3. Strengthen the relationship between private landowners, outdoor recreationists, and interest groups through co-operative conservation ventures.

CWIP emphasizes habitat enhancement, hands-on involvement and co-operation with private landowners. Look for examples of projects in *Partners*.

To get involved, contact the CWIP representative at your local MNR district office to obtain program information and to discuss ideas. Then complete a CWIP application form and submit it to the district office. Most applications are processed in three to four weeks.

## Volunteers flock to Ontario loon survey

Common Loons are one of the most well-known bird species in Ontario, right? We see and hear them on hundreds of Ontario lakes. The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas portrays them as widespread. And the beautiful birds are displayed on countless shirts, sweaters and dollar coins.

Looks can be deceiving. Recent studies have shown that loons are still common, but their numbers may be dwindling. Acid rain, cottage development and recreational activity are all listed as threats to loon populations. But until recently we did not know much about how loons react to these environmental situations. Now, with the help of CWIP, hundreds of volunteers are trying to answer these questions.

In 1981 the Long Point Bird Observatory started to look closely at the status of the Common Loon in Ontario and established the Ontario Lakes Loon Survey (OLLS) — a network of volunteer observers watching out for loons across the province. Eager volunteers turned their scanning time into wildlife research as they scanned lakes for loon observations. With this information OLLS staff found that lake acidity could affect loon productivity. They also discovered that volunteers could make great field assistants.

The OLLS got a financial boost from the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Community Wildlife Involvement Program in 1987, and was promoted with renewed vigor in the hopes of establishing a long-term wildlife monitoring program.

The response was terrific. Hundreds of



volunteers filled out the CWIP-funded questionnaires with information on lakes and loons during the 1987 breeding season. Jane McCracken is OLLS co-ordinator. "Volunteers are usually cottagers that spend a lot of their summer on lakes. They are asked to watch "their" loons and report numbers, breeding information and lake characteristics. We especially ask them to look for young, but we don't ask them to look for nests since this may disturb the loons. We then match the number of young produced, for example, to lake acidity, cottage development, boat use and other characteristics."

"The volunteers are doing a great job. In fact, we like to call them mini-wildlife biologists. Our staff checks showed that the observers are providing reliable information, and this is very encouraging."

Six hundred volunteers surveyed about 400 lakes in 1987, but more volunteers are needed, especially in the Nipissing, Sudbury, Parry Sound and Algoma regions.

"Volunteers naturally tend to survey

lakes that have loons. Meanwhile the acidic lakes, that may have lost their loons, aren't surveyed as often. We need more of this type of information to make comparisons and draw conclusions, and are inviting more people to get involved."

As project biologist, Jane McCracken reads the comments on completed survey sheets. "A lot of people are really proud to be helping a bird that they love, but they also say they are learning a lot about loons because they are taking more time to look and observe the loon's behavior."

Only preliminary results are available at this time so no conclusions can be drawn from last year's survey. We are encouraging OLLS volunteers to remain committed for several years to their lakeside loon studies. We have much to learn about loons in Ontario, and your participation in the OLLS can help."

For more information on the Ontario Lakes Loon Survey, contact the Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0.

## Students help waterfowl in Chatham District

Daryl Smith  
Information Services Co-ordinator  
Chatham District

In June 1987, forty French-speaking students from Ecole Ste. Catharine in Paincourt, Ontario literally got their feet wet and their hands muddy assisting a local property owner with a community wildlife involvement project.

The watery site, northwest of Chatham near Mitchells Bay on Lake St. Clair, is on property owned and managed by lifelong area resident Don Cadotte of the Rex Hunt Club. The enthusiastic Grade 6, 7, and 8 students were conscripted to plant aquatic vegetation in a newly-created 3.5 hectare (8.5 acre) pond. They carefully rooted about 8,000 shoots and tubers of plants like sago pondweed, arrowhead duck potato, and pickerel weed — plants unfamiliar to most humans, but relished by waterfowl. They also seeded several hundred pounds of wild rice.

Cadotte's eager laborers were only too willing to learn about the practical aspects of resource management, particularly when it included an excuse to get wet and muddy on school time and an opportunity to feed on hot dogs and cold pop.

Cadotte's CWIP project — undertaken on behalf of the Rex Hunt Club — involved a fair amount of planning and cooperation with MNR's Chatham District Office. MNR biologists Mick Gauthier

*Continued on page 2*

and George Duckworth offered advice on the type of aquatic vegetation that would establish in the pond and act as a natural attractant for migratory waterfowl. Duckworth was also on hand to distribute the planting stock to the students and explain the proper planting procedures.

The aquatic seed and root stock was obtained from a specialized supply house in Wisconsin, since the material was not available in Ontario. Great care was taken to ensure that the imported stock did not contain any unwanted, non-native species.

Cadotte exudes excitement about his project. The construction of the pond and the surrounding dikes has been funded by



**Students receive instruction prior to a day of planting work**

Ducks Unlimited. Wildlife Habitat Canada is currently providing additional financial assistance for a pumping station for the wetland network that will contribute very substantially to the habitat enhancement of an already valuable wildlife property.

Waterfowl will soon begin to appreciate the pond as much as the students do. Since CWIP funding also assisted in the construction of nesting boxes, the ducks will have both a natural food source and nesting sites — an attractive combination. Students, too, will always be welcome to observe and study the wetland and waterfowl.

Cadotte and his partners are to be congratulated for their imaginative approach toward improving the Lake St. Clair area's potential for waterfowl. And the students are to be thanked for their kid power. Vivent les enfants!

## partners

Vol 2, #1 Published by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch.

This publication is also available in French.

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Printed in Ontario, Canada.

Single copies of this publication are available at no charge from the addresses noted below. Bulk orders may involve charges.

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## Beyond bird boxes

**Ken Maronets**  
Wildlife Management Officer  
Wingham District

*Nest box projects have been the most popular CWIP activity to date, with the eastern bluebird and wood duck getting the lion's share of attention from volunteers. Recently, CWIP Partner Bill Read of Kitchener surveyed many bluebird trail operators including many CWIP participants, and found that almost 5,000 bluebird young were fledged from 8,500 boxes in 1987 alone. And Bill feels there are many bluebird boxes for which there are no records.*

*The eastern bluebird has made a comeback with the help of hundreds of Ontario volunteers.*

**Ken Maronets**, MNR biologist in Wingham District, reminds us that nest box schemes have helped, but they should not be ends in themselves. Rather, they should be viewed as the first step to more substantial habitat enhancement, and as

valuable research tools.

*Ken provides an information sheet to CWIP participants that is paraphrased here for your interest. CWIP considers bird box projects a long-term commitment to the species that should ideally be part of a larger wildlife habitat scheme. If you are planning a project, or have already built bluebird boxes, consider Ken's tips to better nesting success, and his suggestions for long-term bluebird conservation.*

### Bolstering bluebird projects in Wingham District

Artificial nest structures, when maintained in working condition and monitored for use, are but one type of habitat improvement that can help wildlife. Habitat creation and enhancement projects can have more far-reaching benefits for rural wildlife. The development of hedgerows and habitat edges, tree planting, wild apple tree pruning, wetland enhancement and the development of natural food plots in forest openings are a few of the projects



**The Eastern Bluebird has made a dramatic recovery with help from CWIP Partners** (photo: Art Briggs - Jude)

that we know work in Wingham.

But if bluebirds are your bag, read on. As of spring 1988, 367 bluebird nest boxes will be constructed and erected under the CWIP program in Wingham

*Continued on page 3*

## CWIP trophy for 1986 awarded to Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club

The Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club is a powerhouse of volunteers devoted to wildlife management. When CWIP started up in 1985 the club was quick to channel its energy into the program, and by the end of 1986 the club's work was unparalleled. In recognition of their volunteer achievements, the Minister of Natural Resources, Vincent Kerio, awarded them the CWIP trophy for 1986.

The Minister of Natural Resources' Community Wildlife Involvement Program trophy was created to recognize outstanding involvement in CWIP and to acknowledge groups or individuals whose wildlife management projects best reflect the spirit of CWIP. CWIP's basic principles are to enhance wildlife habitat, improve landowner/outdoor recreationist relations, and to improve public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife.

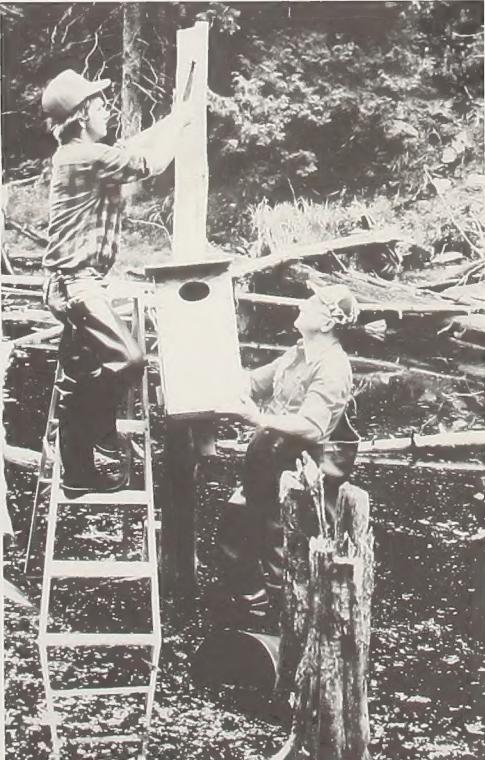
At the time of the award, presented at the 59th annual meeting of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters in Ottawa, the club already had six separate CWIP projects under way, spanning two MNR districts. Specializing in waterfowl enhancement, the club constructed and maintained more than 80 wood duck boxes and 50 waterfowl nesting platforms, and seeded wheat to create an enticing goose staging area on private land.

We described their highly successful beaver pond management projects in the previous issue of *Partners*. They were subsequently featured in the new CWIP video and highlighted in several magazine and newspaper articles. They have also taken their "beaver baffle" expertise on the road, to present the technology to other groups.

Turning their attention inland, the group also planted approximately 10 hectares of clover for deer forage.

Members of the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club have not rested on their laurels. In 1987 they conducted a deer yard survey and a cedar planting program — planting 1,000 trees to enhance deer yard quality — and continued their waterfowl management program. Two of their affiliated hunt clubs also tackled CWIP projects.

What is their secret? "It revolves around having a few key people to keep things going," said Fred Girdwood, "and having a diversity of projects." Fred is



**Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club members erect a wood duck box**

responsible for much of the group's success, and was voted Conservationist of the Month in September, 1987 for his ongoing involvement in CWIP and other wildlife projects.

"You have different groups of people in each club. Some are deer hunters, and are more interested in deer habitat man-

agement. Others may be duck hunters, and might be more into duck box projects." The key is to have someone to get things started.

CWIP salutes the work of Fred Girdwood and the Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club. The future looks bright for wildlife in their neck of the woods.

District. Another 290 boxes are maintained by a private individual. That means more than 650 boxes will be available for bluebirds.

The CWIP Field Manual provides plans for bluebird boxes as well as for other cavity-nesters, including other songbirds, waterfowl, raptors and mammals. Each species responds best to certain design features, so it is important to build nest boxes using the specifications given in the manual for each species. Nest box plans are available from the district office.

If you want to give your boxes a finish to preserve the wood, a wood stain is adequate. But if you want to paint them, a light green, brown or grey should be used. White is too conspicuous and is often shunned by bluebirds. Dark colors absorb heat and may cause boxes to become too hot for bluebird eggs or young. Painting the interior of the box may have mixed results. Some people think that paints and preservatives might harm developing young, while some biologists believe that a white interior will discourage starlings from using a nest box.

Perches should not be placed on bluebird houses as they only encourage house sparrows to take up residence.

Location is crucial. Houses should be placed in semi-open areas such as pastures, fields and rural roadsides. A fence post in a clearing with scattered trees nearby is an ideal location. If open fence lines are to be used, we suggest that CWIP groups improve the adjacent habitat for bluebirds by planting trees and shrubs to develop a hedgerow. Insects, berries and fruits, the bluebird's natural foods, are all abundant on shrubby vegetation.

Bluebird boxes in urban areas or near farm buildings are usually occupied by house sparrows, so placement near building-up areas is not recommended.

The nest box should be placed on a post at least a metre above the ground, generally with the opening facing some nearby trees. The male bluebird often perches in a tree to watch and defend the nest site, and the young may have a better chance of survival if they can make their first flight to a tree.

Erecting boxes too close to large trees provides convenient pathways for predators such as squirrels, raccoons and cats. Metal predator guards approximately 60 centimetres in height can be nailed around the bottom of the post to prevent predators from climbing up. Predator guards should be painted to match the nest boxes.

Nest boxes in the woods will not likely attract bluebirds since they are not birds of the deep forest. Erecting nest boxes in the forest may enhance populations of forest wildlife, such as chickadees or flying squirrels, an interesting project in itself.

#### Anticipate the nesting season

Nesting records kept by CWIP groups indicate that, in Wingham District, new nesting boxes should be up and old boxes should be cleared out by March 15 every year.

The male bluebird arrives first, in mid-May, locates the nest and then attracts a female to join him. Early arrival gives them an advantage over tree swallows which come later. They can defend their nest from swallows, but they are still no match for starlings or house sparrows.

Bluebirds may raise two broods a year. If you observe a successful nest, chances are that the female will start another nest about two weeks after the first young fly the coop. Discard the old nest and debris as soon as the first family is finished with the box. Clear unused boxes of sparrow nests, dirt, and vermin. Bluebirds will not

nest in a shambles.

We recommend that protective gloves and even a breathing mask be worn while emptying boxes, as this will inhibit personal infection with bacteria and parasites that are often found in old nest materials.

#### Be a bluebird researcher

CWIP requires that participants in the program provide records of nest boxes erected and nesting success. These reports are useful both to the MNR and to you. If bluebirds do not appear to be using your boxes then you might consider encouraging the birds to your boxes through habitat enhancement or through following some of the suggestions mentioned here.

Your records should be completed every year for all your nest boxes and forwarded to the MNR, so long-term trends in box use can be documented. You should also provide the district office with exact locations of your boxes, so they can be visited and even monitored by other groups if you wish. Mapping boxes can also tell the ministry where future projects and volunteer energy needs to be directed.

North Bay, the home of the Ontario Trappers Association (OTA), is a mecca for Ontario trappers. Every February, hundreds of trappers and their families converge on the city for the OTA annual convention to meet old friends, trade ideas and challenge one another in contests. The President's Breakfast is a highlight, where trappers and trapper's council air their views on fur bearer management and discuss problems.

The breakfast had a different flavor in 1988. "The President's Breakfast is usually one big gripe session," said OTA president Bill Russell. "This year we decided to turn it into something positive." The difference this year was the premier presentation of the Jim Donnelly Award — given to the trapper's council most active in the field of wildlife conservation.

"The breakfast lasted almost to lunch," said Ivan Foster from the South Lake Simcoe Trapper's Council. "We were given three minutes each to present our council's conservation activities, and there were 31 presentations in all from trapper's councils across Ontario." CWIP had funded many of the projects, including nest box projects, fur management displays and habitat work.

The South Lake Simcoe Trapper's Council, for example, designed and built a boardwalk at Heronwoods, a wildlife sanctuary near Pefferlaw, Ontario. "The trapper's council did much of the work, but the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists were also involved," said Ivan. "An article in the local paper got others interested, and many people have since come for a walk through the property."

"Our chins hit the floor when all these groups described how much they were involved in conservation activities," said Bill Russell. "It was a great success." The number of conservation projects described at the breakfast indicated that the trappers have a strong dedication to wildlife and conservation, but one group stood out from the rest. The 1987 award went to the Northwestern Fur Trappers Association (NFTA) of Thunder Bay.

The Northwestern Fur Trappers had many projects to report on, including clover seeding of log landings, wood duck and skunk box construction, nuisance beaver control, wild rice seeding and an

#### Technical Tips

## Guide to healthy hedgerows

Hedgerows, fencerows, windbreaks — the habitat connection of agricultural lands — are rows of vegetation that stretch across open land, usually around agricultural fields or pasture. Hedgerows can provide food and cover for wildlife in a habitat-poor area, and if planned and managed well can also benefit landowners.

If land is not cultivated it will eventually revert to shrubby vegetation. Some field edges are already brimming with vegetation, while others may have only a few trees. You can help hedgerows along, and consequently help wildlife, with a little planning and a little planting. The following are goals to strive for in developing hedgerows. These may have to be altered to suit the landscape and the interests of landowners.

■ Plant a variety of species that provide food and cover. Trees and shrubs for wildlife were outlined in the first *Partners* newsletter. Coniferous trees and shrubs with dense branching provide good cover.

■ Plant a variety of species that provide food and cover. Trees and shrubs for wildlife were outlined in the first *Partners* newsletter. Coniferous trees and shrubs with dense branching provide good cover.

Plants native to the area are preferable, since they are likely best-adapted to local environmental conditions.

■ Hedgerows are best for wildlife when they link adjacent chunks of habitat. Wetlands, woodlots and thickets are all more accessible to wildlife when linked by a habitat corridor.

■ Lines of tall trees have esthetic appeal, but hedgerows should be diverse and include a variety of species and plant heights. Hedges should not be broken up by large gaps.

■ For wildlife purposes, a hedge should be at least three metres wide. This reduces exposure and drying up of hedgerow plants, and assures adequate cover for animals. Dense growth is preferable. ■ Promote dense growth by pruning existing shrubs.

■ New hedgerows require good planning and should be tended over the first couple of years. Trees and shrubs should be watered during dry periods. Plastic rodent guards will protect young plants from hungry herbivores. Placing mulch (e.g., wood chips or straw) around newly-established plants will reduce weed competition, but also invites mammal activity. Rodent guards should accompany mulching.

■ Inspect new hedges annually. Dead trees and shrubs should be replaced, although taller dead stems should be retained to aid cavity-nesting species. Insect or disease problems should be assessed.

■ Contact your local nursery or MNR district office for planting ideas or advice on problem control.

#### Planning hedgerow planting

General spacing requirements for trees and shrubs are outlined below. Close spacing ensures that vegetation closes in quickly, and allows dead plants to be overgrown by adjacent plants. But planting too close can create stresses, leaving trees and shrubs too weak to survive. Use the following to guide you.

#### Mind your distance

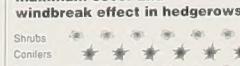
	Distance between plants	Distance between rows
TREES		
coniferous	1.8 metres	2.1 metres
deciduous	1.5 metres	3.0 metres
SHRUBS*		
small	0.3-0.6 metres	0.9-1.2 metres
large	0.6-1.8 metres	1.5-3.0 metres

\* Shrubs are extremely variable in height and width. Consult your sources of information when planning your hedgerow.

#### Staggered spacing

If a multiple-row hedge is planned, stagger your spacing as you would boards on a picket-fence to give the effect of a wall of vegetation (see below).

#### Staggered spacing ensures maximum cover and windbreak effect in hedgerows



This guide was excerpted from the CWIP Field Manual. The manual also contains information on soil and planting requirements of trees and shrubs valuable to wildlife. MNR nurseries may have planting material, although private nurseries are also good sources of trees and shrubs. Contact your local MNR office for details.



## Proposing up osprey populations

Lindsay and Huronia Districts

by David Hamlin  
CWIP/CFIP Technician  
Central Region

Osprey returning to southern Ontario this spring from their wintering grounds in South and Central America will have a homecoming gift waiting for them. Thanks to the Peterborough Field Naturalists and Georgian Bay Osprey Society, 14 nest platforms built and erected during the winter of 1989 will be enticing osprey to land along the shorelines of Lindsay and Huronia districts.

Osprey populations declined substantially in the 1950s and '60s due to the side effects of the chemical DDT and loss of suitable nesting habitat. Populations were so low in 1970 that some Canadian authorities considered the osprey to be endangered. However since the ban of DDT in 1972, and with the erection of nesting structures by private individuals and government, osprey populations have rebounded significantly.

Lindsay District provides a case in point. In 1978, only 22 osprey nests were known to exist in the district – 18 of them active. Since then, MNR staff and local naturalists have embarked on recovery efforts by providing artificial structures for the osprey, which naturally nest on dead or broken-topped trees adjacent to wetlands or lakes where they hunt for fish. The artificial nest platforms have been readily accepted by osprey. In 1988, 92 nests were known to exist – 68 of them active – with a large majority of the active nests on platforms.

With the knowledge that the number of available nesting sites may be limiting popu-

lations elsewhere, the Peterborough Field Naturalists and Georgian Bay Osprey Society each submitted applications to the Community Wildlife Involvement Program for funds to build nest platforms. Both groups planned their work for the winter when suitable sites could be easily reached by foot or snowmobile.

The Peterborough Field Naturalists, led by Terry Hunter, received funding to build and erect ten osprey nest platforms at various shoreline and wetland sites in the district. On February 4 of this year a dedicated group of naturalists and several MNR employees set out to erect two of these nest platforms. A tripod nest structure, which is made from five-metre cedar poles, was selected by the Peterborough group. Holes were made in the ice over shallow water, and poles were driven into the mud at angles to form a tripod. A triangular frame made from two-by-four lumber was nailed to the top of the tripod to form the base of the nest, and finally, branches woven into fence wire were added to start the nest. Over the remaining Saturdays in Febru-



Single pole design used by Georgian Bay Osprey Society

ary, the other eight nests were successfully completed. Eleven people were involved in the project, with a core group of five or six involved in every nest erected.

Seven members of the Georgian Bay Osprey Society erected four nest platforms, with the first two going up on February 16 in the Honey Harbour area. This group, led by Kitte and George Fells, has been active in raising awareness and concern for nesting osprey, particularly among cottage owners. The platforms they built were erected on solid rock and supported by a single pole. A local contractor was called in to drill a hole into rock for each pole. Each pole was anchored at the base by three rock bolts as well as three guy wires for further stability. Each nest platform consists of a frame with wire mesh stapled on to form the base. A total of

twelve volunteers worked on different aspects of the project over the winter.

Promising results have been recorded for both projects. Terry Hunter reported that osprey have been seen flying around the new nest platforms built by the Peterborough group, although none have nested on them yet. The group is encouraged by the interest the osprey have shown in the platforms. Kitte Fells reports that all four nests in Georgian Bay group erected have been occupied by osprey and they are closely monitoring the success of any young that hatch this year.

CWIP congratulates Terry Hunter and the Peterborough Field Naturalists and Kitte and George Fells and the Georgian Bay Osprey Society. Their dedicated work in building and erecting nest platforms should help "prop up" osprey populations throughout Ontario.

## What is CWIP?

The Community Wildlife Involvement Program is a network of Ministry of Natural Resources personnel and the public, working together as partners in wildlife management. Individuals or groups provide the ideas and volunteer labor for wildlife projects, while the ministry contributes technical expertise and funding for equipment and materials. Any project that conforms to the intent of CWIP is eligible for funding requests up to \$3,000, although larger projects will also be considered.

To be funded by CWIP, projects should:

1. Increase the variety, abundance or distribution of wildlife, thereby increasing recreational opportunities;
2. Increase public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife, or
3. Strengthen the relationship between land owners, outdoor recreationists, and interest groups through co-operative conservation ventures.

CWIP emphasizes habitat enhancement, hands-on involvement and co-operation between interest groups. To get involved, contact the CWIP representative at your local MNR district office to obtain program information and to discuss ideas. Then complete a CWIP application form and submit it to the district office. Most applications are processed in three to four weeks.

## Rejuvenating marshes in Napanee District

by Karen Bellamy  
Fish and Wildlife Management Officer  
Napanee District

Lake Ontario's shoreline marshes have been lost to development at a tremendous rate. Amherst Island, in the eastern part of the lake, south of Kingston is an exception. Amherst and neighboring Nut Island are blessed with significant wetlands that are valuable habitats for marsh wildlife and important staging areas for waterfowl during migration. Members of the Amherst Wildlife Foundation, stewards of two of these wetlands, are undertaking an exciting marsh management project with the help of the Community Wildlife Involvement Program and Ducks Unlimited to enhance these properties for wildlife.

The marshes, one on Amherst and the other across a narrow strait on Nut Island, have gradually become choked with cattails, and the channels and ponds that were once scattered throughout the marshes have become filled in by sediment and vegetation. This is a natural successional process that is sped up drastically by inputs of silt and fertilizers from agricultural areas. Marsh management can help restore some of the wetland's habitat diversity, making it more attractive to a variety of wetland species.

In consultation with MNR, the Amherst Wildlife Foundation designed a project to develop "hemimarsh" conditions in the wet-

land, with meandering channels and small pond areas, and a ratio of open water to aquatic vegetation of approximately 1 to 1. The channels were created using a floating backhoe that can clear a 2.1-metre-wide channel through the dense cattail mats. This unique piece of equipment can dig 15 to 18 metres of channel an hour.

Work got underway at the end of July. As the channels were dug, the dredged silt, cattails and organic matter were placed in piles scattered randomly along the channels. Waterfowl may make use of these as nesting islands next year. According to Ian Grant, a

Floating backhoe at work



member of the Amherst Wildlife Foundation who is helping co-ordinate the project, the ducks are already starting to use these islands as nesting areas. Turtles can also be seen loafing on the mounds.

Creating islands with the dredged material rather than a continuous earthen strip will allow for better waterflow and movement of fish throughout the marsh. The channels created will improve habitat for waterfowl and provide much better habitat for muskrats in the marsh. A mixture of habitat types will be created that may entice a wider variety of species back to the marsh.

A number of Canada geese nest in fields on Nut Island but the goslings have difficulty fighting their way through the dense cattails to the open water areas of the marsh. To help improve survival of the goslings, members of the foundation have now created openings that will serve as broad trails, from the edges of the nesting fields to the open water.

The Amherst Wildlife Foundation is complementing the marsh management work by building and installing 50 nesting rafts in the newly created open water areas. This very active club predicts they will spend close to 300 volunteer hours before the project is complete.

This CWIP project has had a snowball effect. Ducks Unlimited is now proposing an agreement with the Amherst Wildlife Foundation to expand this technique of wetland management to other areas in the marsh.

# Trappers group wins 1988 CWIP award for rabies research project



Trappers group accepts 1988 CWIP trophy

A pilot project to study the effectiveness of the hand-delivery of rabies vaccine bait in the wild has won the Waterloo-Blenheim Rabies Control Group the 1988 Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP) award.

Murray Smith, then Acting Director of Wildlife Branch, presented the trophy to a representative of the trappers group at a ceremony held in early October at the outset of a second phase in the project.

"By providing valuable information for our rabies researchers, this project has taken us one step further in our fight against rabies among wild animals," said Mr. Smith.

The rabies research project was initiated by the group, which is made up of members of four trappers' councils from Waterloo-Blenheim, North Wellington, Hamilton-Wentworth and Aylmer.

CWIP provided funds for this experimental project which included a questionnaire survey of local landowners to determine areas of high densities of foxes. The 150 volunteers then distributed 16,000 pieces of test bait during two days in September, 1988, in Blandford-Blenheim, Nichol and Ancaster townships. The test bait was a small cube of beef tallow, wax, mineral oil and chicken flavor containing a small plastic pouch with tetracycline.

During the following five months, the trappers collected carcasses of fox, skunk, raccoon and coyote from the test areas and

delivered them to the Rabies Unit at Maple. By analysing tooth and brain samples from the carcasses, the Rabies Unit was able to determine how many animals took the baits as well as how many had rabies.

The test was so successful that the group has received another CWIP grant to assist the ministry in a similar experimental project in three neighboring townships. This year the test bait will contain rabies vaccine.

Wildlife Management Officer Bruce Buckland has worked closely with the group from the inception of the project. "Their work is invaluable," he says, "There is no way the program would have succeeded without the expertise and dedication of these trappers. They know where foxes live and travel in search of food, and know the country like the backs of their hands. The trappers have put in a tremendous amount of time with the questionnaire survey, contacting landowners, mapping observations and den sites, field checking, organizing volunteers and delivering the baits."

"The trappers are showing a definite commitment to wildlife management and the understanding of wildlife ecology through this project," says Buckland, "In the long term this project should lead to healthier wildlife populations for all to enjoy. We are looking forward to a smooth and successful second phase of the project."

# A community project for London's Sifton Bog

by Bill Murch  
Information Services Coordinator  
Aylmer District

A boardwalk to replace the existing one in the Sifton Botanical Bog was built and installed this fall by the McIlwraith Field Naturalists, the London Public Utilities Commission and students from Clarke Road Secondary School. The passage of time as well as some not-too-friendly users have taken their toll on the present structure, which has reduced interpretive opportunities at the site. Community interest in the bog culminated in a CWIP project to rectify the problem.

The value of the Sifton Bog has long been recognized in the London area. It is the most southerly large acid bog in Canada. The tamarack and black spruce surrounding the floating bog of sphagnum moss around what is called Redmond's Pond are a marked contrast to the Carolinian species common to this part of southern Ontario. From the middle of the bog one has the impression of being somewhere in Algonquin Park.

This remnant of glacial history is situated in the west end of London with the entrance off Oxford Street, one of the city's main thoroughfares. Surrounded by residential and commercial development, the Sifton Bog is a haven for naturalists and other visitors in an urban landscape.

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority acquired the 22.7 hectare property in 1966 and 1967. It has been incorporated into London's park system through an arrangement with the Public Utilities Commission with a special provision to preserve it in its natural state. The Ministry of Natural Resources has designated the bog as a Class II wetland and an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest of regional significance.

The McIlwraith Field Naturalists have an active public education program on the importance of the protection of the environment and often use Sifton Bog for tours. Students engaged in environmental studies are frequent visitors as well. There is a walking trail

around the bog through the upland and lowland forest areas and there was an extensive but aging 16.1-metre boardwalk extending into the heart of the wetland.

To improve safe access and educational opportunities at the bog, the McIlwraith club worked out a community project to rebuild the wetland boardwalk. Students in the woodworking class at Clarke Road Secondary School built approximately 80 1.8 and 2.4 metre sections which the Public Utilities Commission transferred to the site. From there the members of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists and other volunteers carried prefabricated sections into the bog and set them in place. This work was scheduled for completion in December of 1989.

Under the ministry's Community Wildlife Involvement Program, the groups have received funding for the materials and advice on the method of construction. With the boardwalk in place, the important second stage of developing and erecting interpretive signs and displays can follow.

As well as protect the wetland from human impact, the new boardwalk will help the public enjoy and learn about this significant natural area. Education campaigns, like those undertaken by the McIlwraith Field Naturalists, are essential if we are to protect Ontario's remaining wetlands. Wetland boardwalks, such as the one for Sifton Bog, can be excellent resources for these efforts.



McIlwraith Field Naturalists assemble new boardwalk

## Making Connections

Information on co-operative conservation projects  
Keeping track of Ontario's reptiles and amphibians

In 1984 a small group of keen naturalists started a new volunteer survey along the lines of the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas*. Rather than cataloguing breeding birds in 10-kilometre squares across the province, this group was searching for information on herpetofauna, commonly known as reptiles and amphibians. The *Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary* was born, and has already made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of the distribution, abundance and ecology of Ontario's toads, frogs, snakes, turtles and other "herps." Many of these animals depend on wetlands for breeding, feeding or other periods of their life history.

This has been entirely a volunteer effort involving almost 2,000 contributors. Typical forays include roadside surveys for frog or toad calls, intensive searches of breeding pools for salamanders, or turning over logs and rocks looking for snakes. It's not everybody's cup of tea, but for those involved it is a great challenge, and it's fun. Like the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas*, this important project is occurring only because of the dedicated efforts of volunteers.

### Natural History "Yellow Pages"

In 1989, CWIP supported the Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary by helping to pay for the

To obtain a free copy of this directory, write to Mark Stubb of MNR's Wildlife Branch. For more information on the Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary, read on.

**Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary** - a survey of reptile and amphibian populations in southern Ontario; observations will contribute to an atlas of the reptiles and amphibians of Ontario.

**Goals** - to document the presence of amphibians and reptiles in all of southern Ontario and wherever possible in northern Ontario; to collect information on behavior and ecology of Ontario's herpetofauna; to make this information available in a form useful for research and conservation of Ontario's reptiles and amphibians.

**Requirements** - ability to identify Ontario's amphibians and reptiles visually or by calls; volunteers must fill out sightings cards including information on location and habitat.

**Contact** - Martyn Obbard, Business Manager, Ontario Field Herpetologists, R.R. #2, Cambridge, Ontario N3C 2V4.

**What participants get** - participant's guide, sightings cards, newsletters. Summaries of provincial records can be purchased from the address above.

< Young northern water snake



Mark Stubb  
Editor, *Partners*

MNR of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch,  
Whitney Block, Queen's Park, M7A 1W3

# Protecting the Petrel Point Fen

by Bob Gray  
District Ecologist  
Owen Sound District

Fens are fascinating places. They are wetlands with very slow internal drainage through seepage, covered primarily with sedges and often interspersed with shrubs and a sparse layer of trees. They can provide excellent habitat for nesting shorebirds and waterfowl, as well as many other species of plants and animals.

The Petrel Point Nature Reserve, located on the Lake Huron shoreline, 14 kilometres northwest of Wiarton, is considered to be the best and most intact fen community on the lower Bruce Peninsula. It is extremely alkaline in nature, being located on wet sand over the dolomite of the Niagara Escarpment. It is home to Wilson's snipe, mallard duck, blue-winged teal, pintail, baird owl and spotted turtle.

Several rare plants including Indian plain-tain, birds-eye primrose and dwarf lake iris occur, as well as many species of orchid and insect-eating plants. Because of these attributes the Ministry of Natural Resources ranked the area as both a Class II wetland and a life science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. The dwarf lake iris is of particular interest as the only place in the world it is found is along the Great Lakes shoreline.

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON) purchased the southern 12 hectares of the reserve in the late 1960s and added another 8.5 hectares in 1984. The FON's Nature Reserves Committee completed a master plan for the reserve in 1984, identifying the need to protect the area from the ravages of four-wheel drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes.



Lowering the water table by ditching could have severe impacts on both plants and animals.

In the meantime, everyone is encouraged to visit Petrel Point Nature Reserve to experience this fascinating fen.

Over the years the reserve has gradually become a focal point for a large number of visiting naturalists, photographers, bird watchers and wildlife viewers. To manage this intensive use, the plan calls for improved access to the fen via boardwalk, to minimize damage to the sensitive habitat by trampling. Interpretive signs were recommended, to explain the significance of the site.

"The concentration and abundance of wildflowers, both in number and species in such a small area is very significant," explained Donald Kirk, Chairman of the Nature Reserves Committee and volunteer co-ordinator for the project. "For instance, I have never seen so many grass pink orchids anywhere. There are thousands of them." A boardwalk would provide tremendous opportunities to interpret these and other natural features of the wetland to the public. This is where CWIP comes on the scene.

In 1986 the FON decided to embark on a program which would implement the management recommendations detailed in the master plan. FON members, working with ministry staff, had three CWIP projects approved between 1986 and 1988. Some 500 hours of volunteer labor were utilized to install 300 metres of wire fence, a 250 metre boardwalk loop trail and signs.

"This is a great project," said John Almond, then CWIP/CFIP Technician with the ministry in Owen Sound. "It protects the plants and animals, while allowing people to see them without harming the resource."

In the short term, the future of the reserve looks bright. However, the sensitive fen community is still threatened by impending cottage development on adjacent properties.

By Peter Gill  
Information Services  
Co-ordinator  
Simcoe District

*More than 50 Ontario wildlife species depend on tree cavities for significant portions of their life history. Of these the barn-owl is considered threatened in the province and three species are listed as officially rare. The rare eastern bluebird is on the road to recovery thanks to the thousands of nest boxes erected for them across the province, many of them by CWIP volunteers. The following article describes the first Ontario conservation efforts for two other rare cavity-nesters, both of which inhabit flooded swamps of Canada's deep south.*

The Norfolk Field Naturalists Club is an active and dedicated group in what was Old Norfolk County on Lake Erie's north shore in the heart of Carolinian Canada. This part of Canada's deep south enjoys a mild climate thanks to the tempering influence of Lake Erie. Norfolk's deep upland soils and numerous wetlands support a rich variety of vegetation. This combination of climate and topography supports one of the richest collections of wildlife in eastern Canada. In fact, Old Norfolk is a naturalist's paradise.

But even in paradise there is room for improvement - especially when two of its rarer residents could benefit from some low cost housing. That is what the Norfolk Field Naturalists had in mind when they applied for a recent CWIP grant to purchase materials for constructing nesting boxes for the colorful prothonotary warbler and the equally interesting southern flying squirrel.

Both species nest in natural cavities in older trees - but as the trees disintegrate or are cut down, the necessary habitat diminishes.

Enter the "Norfolks" and their CWIP project. So far, 20 boxes have been constructed and erected for the warblers and another eight units were set out for flying squirrels. The boxes are made of two cm plywood and have a hinged wall for inventory and cleanout purposes.

John Haggeman, a keen biologist and specialist in wetlands is the project co-ordinator for the naturalists. According to John, the squirrel boxes were in place a bit too late to be used for nesting this year. However, one box appears to have been used as a roosting



Norfolk Field Naturalist examines prothonotary warbler nest box

site by this gliding member of the squirrel family.

The prothonotary warbler boxes have attracted broader client attention. One was stuffed with twigs - apparently the work of a house wren. Two boxes fledged tree swallows. Two contained prothonotary nests which weren't used. But one of the boxes was in the right place at the right time and was used by the rare warbler to raise a family.

The boxes were set out in the lower Big Creek Valley on land owned by the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, the Bayou Hunt Club, the Murray Marsh Club and several private landowners.

Jon McCracken, a migration specialist with the Long Point Bird Observatory and a club member, was the "consulting architect" for the warbler homes. On Jon's advice the prothonotary boxes were set out in treed swamps, but near shrub growth so the young can find a dry landing spot.

In contrast, the flying squirrel boxes, based on a design provided by Mark Stabb of MNR's Wildlife Branch, are set at seven metres above ground. The boxes' climbing step, portable ladder, a cautious sense of balance and a coat with big pockets were essential for this project.

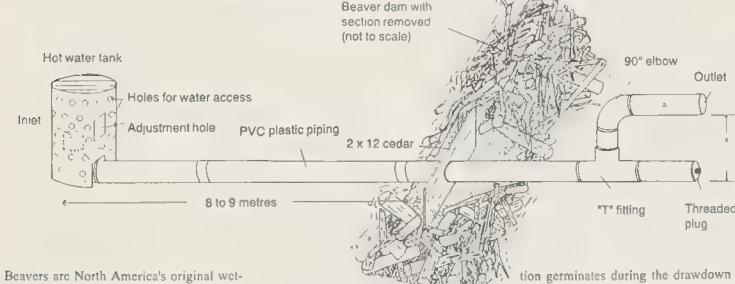
Next year's inventory should give a clearer picture of whether the accommodation is acceptable to the prospective clients.

With homes in flooded swamps, you might think the tenants would be muddering about damp basements. But to the prothonotary warblers and southern flying squirrels, the location couldn't be better. Besides, the price is right. The Norfolk Field Naturalists have quickly won a reputation as being excellent landlords.

## Technical Tip - The Beaver Baffler

Source: Community Wildlife Involvement Program Field Manual

### "Beaver Baffler" Water level control structure



Beavers are North America's original wetland managers. Ponds created by these natural engineers benefit all wetland wildlife. But beaver ponds are dynamic habitats. In time they develop into natural meadows and young forests that create a mosaic of habitat types across the landscape.

CWIP volunteers working with private landowners are maintaining many of these ponds in a marsh state. They employ a simple but ingenious device -- the "beaver baffle" -- to maintain water levels at desirable heights and to allow older ponds to be rejuvenated through a technique known as drawdown. A section of plastic pipe is incorporated into the

base of the dam and is used to manage the height of water in the pond. Control over water levels is important for two reasons: it allows marsh vegetation to be promoted, and it allows landowners to maintain beaver ponds without having their entire property flooded over.

Drawdown involves reducing water levels to the point where the pond soil is saturated. Accumulated plant debris decomposes and dramatically increases the nutrient content of the marsh. After one or two growing seasons the area is re-flooded. Marsh vegeta-

tion germinates during the drawdown and becomes food and cover for wildlife where previously there was little in the way of wetland habitat available.

Beavers are central to this project. They maintain the dam while the plastic piping frustrates their attempts at grandiose pond creation. The figure above gives some ideas of the technique. Beaver bafflers have proven extremely successful in small scale wetland management, and in dealing with beavers that cause problems on private lands. For detailed plans on how to build and maintain these devices, contact your local MNR district office.

## GET YOURS TODAY!

**CWIP Wetlands Crests Available**

All of us have a place in our hearts for wood ducks. Now CWIP participants can make a place for them on their jackets, caps, packs or vests. The Working for Wetlands crest is available to all CWIP volunteers in 1989 projects. A male "woody" is featured on this year's crest, which will undoubtedly turn heads and attract attention to your group's CWIP conservation efforts.

To get a crest you must have participated in a CWIP project, and have your name registered on a volunteer agreement form that should be in the hands of your project coordinator. These forms must be submitted to the district office with a brief final report on the outcome of the project.

Through CWIP, volunteers are helping out wood ducks in Ontario wetlands. Help spread the wetland conservation message by obtaining and displaying your Working for Wetlands crest.



# Students working for wildlife of northern wetlands

by Gord Francis  
Fish and Wildlife Technician  
Kenora District

When you think of cavity-nesting ducks, the beautiful wood duck most often comes to mind. And when you think of helping these birds, you may often think only of the carpentry side of conservation. This story from the Northwestern Region will make you think again. It shows the level of detail involved in a seemingly simple waterfowl conservation project that could benefit four different species of wetland ducks. What it took was a dedicated MNR employee, keen teachers and students, and a little monetary help from CWIP.

During the winter of 1989 the Kenora District Office of MNR and Lakewood Intermediate School embarked on a joint environmental project funded by CWIP. The wildlife management objective was to enhance nesting opportunities for cavity-nesting ducks in local swamps and marshes, but it was also designed to give students a chance to work co-operatively to achieve their goals. The first phase involved the construction of 125 waterfowl nesting boxes by the school's industrial shop department. In assembly line fashion, students worked in small groups with specific responsibilities; each group depended on the next to do its best at the assignment. This venture generated 125 well-constructed nesting boxes -- the students worked together very successfully in their team effort.

While the shop department was busy with construction, another nominated group of students embarked on the research phase of the program. By obtaining films and other materials from MNR and Ducks Unlimited Canada they became class experts on waterfowl habitat and on the requirements for maintaining healthy populations of four species of cavity-nesting waterfowl: wood ducks, common goldeneye, bufflehead and hooded mergansers, all of which inhabit the Kenora area.

The mini-biologists produced guidelines for identifying and assessing swamps and marshes that would be suitable for waterfowl.

Female wood duck and young

Male wood duck



The classroom work culminated with a map exercise that allowed the students to locate and assess potential water bodies that would benefit from the addition of nest structures. MNR staff then reviewed and modified the choices of the students, but found that on the whole their selections were quite appropriate.

The moment of truth came during the last week in March. In the frigid air of late winter the students loaded a bus with ladders, tools and nest boxes. With teachers, parents and MNR staff in tow, they headed out to the selected sites. On location, students surveyed the area for individual nest box sites, using the criteria

learned in class, and scrambled up their ladders to affix the boxes.

After the first expedition students and teachers, with the aid of the shop instructors improved the installation method using battery-operated drills. Improving techniques proved to be another of the learning benefits of the program.

Now that all the boxes have been erected one might think the program was finished. On the contrary, it is just starting. Monitoring and box maintenance will continue into the future with follow-up reports indicating box success, species that use the boxes, and problems encountered.

Which species might use the structures? Wood ducks most likely will take up residence, but there is a chance that the less common cavity-nesting ducks may also use the boxes. Other cavity-nesters such as kestrels or boreal owls will also be welcome.

Will it be a success? You bet! Whenever we can get maturing students to be involved in environmental activities, we all benefit immensely. Early indications are that the wood ducks like the project too.



## The Wood Duck Connection

by Jack Colonello  
Fish and Wildlife Technician  
Simcoe District

Members of the Long Point Fish and Game Club are ambassadors for Simcoe District's wood duck populations. Over the last year they have worked co-operatively with local landowners to enhance nesting opportunities for these ducks on private land.

The Long Point Club has been erecting nesting boxes in local wetlands for a number of years now, and the move to work with private landowners is a logical extension of its ongoing conservation efforts.

Brad Eldridge, Jim and Lori Box, and Gerry and Margaret Moyer all own properties with wetland habitat suitable for wood ducks and expressed to the Simcoe District Office their interest in the program. With co-operation and conservation in mind, we decided to try to make some connections. We linked up the experience and interest of the fish and game club with the willing landowners in a wood duck nest box project.

In 1984 Phil Bease, a member of the club, constructed 60 nest boxes through a CWIP

grant. The boxes were held in storage and distributed to Brad Eldridge, the Box and Moyer families and others interested in wood ducks who did not have the tools or expertise to build nesting boxes. Each landowner also received directions on how to maintain and monitor the nest boxes to make their efforts a long-term conservation project. CWIP volunteers are able to place the boxes in wetlands immediately upon project approval.

The ready-made nest boxes also came in handy when an application was made to initiate a CWIP wood duck management project just before the birds arrived back from the south. In such a case, by the time the project received approval it would have been too late for the person to start building the boxes and we would have lost the advantage of one nesting season. A reserve batch of boxes is very useful in these circumstances.

Cavity nesting ducks are the primary beneficiaries of this coordinated effort. And by working together, the landowners and this conservation group are demonstrating the co-operative approach that is needed to protect and conserve wildlife habitat in southern Ontario.

## Ducks Unlimited Greenwings in Action

by Ted Lucking  
Extension Specialist  
Northern Region

When you think about it, CWIP is really for children. Conservation projects in schoolyards, playgrounds and parks are run by kids, for kids. And the effort of organized groups such as sportspeople, trappers or naturalists are aimed at benefits for future generations. By combining the interest and experience of adults with the enthusiastic performance of kids, we have the makings of an excellent community project.

Projects by Duck Unlimited "Greenwings" are models of this community spirit. Greenwings are youngsters aged 17 and under who work in a club associated with a local Ducks Unlimited committee. The name, besides referring to budding conservationists, comes from the field term for greenwing teal -- a common dabbling duck of Ontario marshes. The goal of Greenwings is to foster a sense of responsibility for the conservation of waterfowl and wetland environments.

This past winter and spring, Ray Hudson, Greenwings chairperson in Timmins headed up a nesting box project for goldeneye and wood ducks. Using a CWIP grant, a few small donations, and a volunteered warehouse for a working area, in mid-March Ray's crew of volunteers cut wood, numbered and prepared the materials necessary for 200 boxes for cavity-nesting ducks. The same helpers held a box-building bee to help the Greenwings assemble, glue, nail, paint and package the boxes on March 24, prior to distribution on March 25. The idea was to get them distributed and into the field prior to nesting season.

Timmins Ducks Unlimited personnel presented a program on duck biology and conservation to the Greenwings, and the boxes were distributed to Greenwing families with

instructions regarding hanging sites and suitable habitat. The youngsters were directed to select wooded areas adjacent to marshes for their new box sites, but also to choose areas frequented by family members for ease of maintenance and checking.

This first stage was completed without a hitch. Fourteen Ducks Unlimited members, one trapper, 12 off-duty MNR employees and seven other individuals pitched in to help 56 Greenwings tackle an active conservation project. All those involved learned something - from planning and organization to the research phase -- and all made new acquaintances as well. The Greenwings' exposure to this community effort had to be worthwhile.

To a certain extent the easy part is finished. Next comes the exacting task of keeping records, the chore of annual cleaning of boxes, and the challenge of maintaining enthusiasm for the project in years to come. The Greenwings were made aware that the idea was not just to build boxes, and that wildlife conservation requires constant effort, attention and dedication.

The commitment of local Duck Unlimited members will undoubtedly ensure that cavity-nesting ducks will benefit annually from this management activity. Through this project Greenwings are learning that they can get involved in conservation, and by monitoring results, they will see that they can make a difference. In this way the benefits to people and wildlife extend well beyond the simple hanging of 200 duck boxes.

As Ray Hudson says: "It was gratifying to go through such a project as it involved helping wildlife and contributing to the education of Greenwings. The icing on the cake came in seeing the children react so energetically throughout the whole project."

Through CWIP, adult volunteers are helping Greenwings and other young people take their first steps into the world of conservation.

# partners

CWIP / Community Wildlife Involvement Program Winter '91

## Brock Professor Wins 1989 CWIP Trophy



Brock Professor wins CWIP trophy

### What is CWIP

The Community Wildlife Involvement Program is a network of Ministry of Natural Resources personnel and the public, working together as partners in wildlife management. Individuals or groups provide the ideas and volunteer labor for wildlife projects, while the ministry contributes technical expertise and funding for equipment and materials. Any project that conforms to the intent of CWIP is eligible for funding requests up to \$3,000, although larger projects will also be considered.

To be funded by CWIP, projects should

1. Increase the variety, abundance or distribution of wildlife, thereby increasing recreational opportunities;
2. Increase public awareness and understanding of Ontario's wildlife, or
3. Strengthen the relationship between land owners, outdoor recreationists, and interest groups through co-operative conservation ventures.

CWIP emphasizes habitat enhancement, hands-on involvement and co-operation between interest groups. To get involved, contact the CWIP representative at your local MNR district office to obtain program information and discuss ideas. Then complete a CWIP application form and submit it to the district office. Most applications are processed in three to four weeks.

■ Ontario's trappers are committed to improving the humanity of their profession and are actively working to stop the catch of unwanted animals and to maintain healthy populations of all wildlife species.

A recent study by a group of Northern Ontario trappers is an excellent example of their dedication to these goals. Working with MNR staff, the trappers used CWIP funds to construct and evaluate experimental marten cubbies (boxes containing traps) that they hope will eliminate the catch of non-target animals such as squirrels during the trapping season and become home to cavity-nesting birds in the off-season. Milan Novak of the Wildlife Policy Branch designed the experimental sets.

CWIP emphasizes habitat enhancement, hands-on involvement and co-operation between interest groups. To get involved, contact the CWIP representative at your local MNR district office to obtain program information and discuss ideas. Then complete a CWIP application form and submit it to the district office. Most applications are processed in three to four weeks.

■ Wally Poole of Fonthill is the winner of the 1989 Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP) award.

Dr. Poole, a professor of education at Brock University, was awarded the CWIP trophy for his work enhancing wildlife habitat in his community. He is also a leader for Project WILD, a program aimed at teaching young people about wildlife ecology and conservation, and holds regular education workshops for teachers.

Former Natural Resources Minister Lyn McLeod presented the award to Dr. Poole in a ceremony at Brock University in St. Catharines on May 9, 1990.

Dr. Poole initiated two CWIP projects in the Niagara region. A total of 150 elementary, secondary and university students spent more than 1,000 hours planting hedgerows, native trees and shrubs on public property.

Dr. Poole also convinced the town of Pelham to incorporate CWIP habitat conservation principles into some of its planning documents.

The CWIP program was established by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1985. Since then, a total of 706 projects have involved 18,500 volunteers, who have performed more than 167,000 hours of wildlife conservation work.

Dr. Poole is the first individual to win the CWIP trophy. Previous winners include the Waterloo-Blenheim Rabies Control Group (1988) for their work in studying the effectiveness of hand-delivery of rabies vaccine bait in the wild; the Pollution Probe Foundation (1987) for establishing an urban wildlife habitat in downtown Toronto; and the Algonquin and District Fish and Game Club (1986) for their extensive involvement in a number of projects, especially in waterfowl habitat enhancement.

Individuals and groups wishing to get involved with CWIP projects should contact their local MNR district office.

### Martens, Flying Squirrels and Cavity-Nesters: Trappers Provide the Link

by Andy Heerschap and Pat Brown  
Fish and Wildlife Section  
Hearst District  
and Brian Naylor  
Humane Trapping Program  
Wildlife Branch

The sets used wood or tin to enclose the bait and trap were placed in a tree or on a stump. Trees and shrubs around the stumps were removed and some stumps were encircled by a 15 cm (six inch) high tin collar to further discourage curious animals from climbing into the baited traps.

The trappers volunteered their time to set out and check the traps. They kept detailed records of the number and types of animals captured, where martens were struck by the traps and the frequency of tracks around the sites.

Sylvio St. Jules says "The trappers were eager to experiment with these new marten sets, and faithfully collected the required information



Marten trap in place in forest throughout the winter, even when temperatures fell below -40°C."

The trappers' commitment to this program was summarized by participant Leon Lecours "We've gotten so much out of trapping in the past that we're happy to be able to put something back in."

Many trappers are also concerned about the possible shortage of nest sites for hole-nesting birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, swallows, and bluebirds that may result from modern forestry practices.

Here's where cubbies in the above study will help. To improve habitat conditions for these birds, the cubbies were modified to act as nest boxes during the spring and summer. This involved drilling a 4.5 cm (1 3/4 in) access hole in the front of each box and constructing an enclosed bait compartment that could double as a nesting chamber. If mid-summer 1990 inspections of these cubbies indicate they are being used as nest boxes, it is hoped that trappers across the province will build or modify some of their existing marten boxes to serve this dual purpose.

Experimental CWIP projects such as these illustrate the commitment of both trappers and MNR to make trapping in Ontario more humane and adaptable for the benefit of other wildlife species.

< Hearst Trappers at building bee

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# Farming for Wildlife

by Marilyn Twiss  
Wildlife Biologist  
North Bay District

A doe and her two fawns pause at the edge of a small field, ears and noses twitching nervously, until the doe is satisfied that all is well. She then picks her way daintily into the opening and lowers her head to graze the succulent young clover. While she eats, her fawns bound playfully up and down the field as if their legs are on springs.

This would be a typical scene in southern Ontario where farm fields abound. However, the setting is actually just outside North Bay. It is a direct result of a CWIP project to bring overgrown fields back into "production" for wildlife. This project took place on lands owned by Charlie Champagne and his brother Louis. Both are members of the Nosbonsing Anglers and Hunters and Charlie is also a trapper. He says, "Wildlife is important to all of us and it's nice to be able to do something to improve the habitat."

Wildlife managers have long recognized the importance of habitat diversity in the management of wildlife populations. Clearings with plant life containing herbs provide varied forested habitats and increase "edge" areas that are important to many wildlife species. Ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, black bears, snowshoe hares, meadow voles, kestrels and numerous songbirds are among those species benefiting from this habitat mosaic. The clearings can provide food, nesting cover and brood rearing habitat for birds, and have a crucial role to play in the life of deer in northern Ontario.

The value of openings to deer is recognized in MNR's "Standards and Guidelines for Deer Habitat Management in Ontario". Openings are listed as one of three basic features which indicate overall quality of deer habitat, the others being the amounts of second growth forest and cone-bearing trees for shelter. Openings should be between 0.2 and 4 ha (one-half to ten acres) in size and should be covered with herbaceous vegetation containing few, if any, woody plants. Ideally, openings should be surrounded by forested land. Five to fifteen per cent of the managed area should be in openings.

A lack of suitable openings for wildlife habitat has been recognized as a problem in

North Bay District where most of the land base is forested. Many groups have rallied round to help remedy the situation through CWIP projects.

The Commanda and Area Hunters and Anglers were the first to carry out a project in 1986. They completed two more projects in 1987 and 1989, on Crown and private lands in the Loring-Golden Valley area - home to one of the largest deer herds in Ontario.

The Nosbonsing Anglers and Hunters completed five projects between 1987 and 1989, managing abandoned fields on private land south-east of North Bay.

Smaller groups have also made valuable contributions. The following hunt clubs have all carried out CWIP projects to provide clearings in their areas: Pine Ridge Hunt Club (1987), Beaver Meadow Hunt Camp (2 projects, 1988 and 1989), Elkhart Hunt Club (1988), Durrell Lake Hunt Club (1988), Bear Valley Hunt Club (1989) and Camp-des-Pins (1989).

A total of 59.54 hectares (147 acres) have been tilled, fertilized and seeded through the 15 projects and 124 volunteers have invested approximately 1,325 hours in "farming" for wildlife. This has made a valuable contribution to the district's deer management objectives and more work is planned.

The work, which was done on old logging roads, log landings and abandoned farm fields, really was like farming. The first step was to cultivate the ground to promote good seed



germination and growth. Usually a tractor with a plough and discs was used, but in some cases a skidder or even a bulldozer was found to be more efficient. The volunteers donated the use of this equipment or, where this was not possible, the work was contracted out. Almost all groups donated the use of all-terrain vehicles to transport bags of fertilizer and seed.

Step two of the project was to fertilize the area using a 10-10-10 or 15-15-15 (N-P-K) fertilizer. The average application rate for these projects was 163 kg/ha (145 lb./acre).



After the ground was cultivated and fertilized, the last step was to seed it using hand seeders. The seed mixture which was used included creeping red fescue, Canada or Kentucky blue grass, single or double-cut red clover, Dutch white clover, orchard grass and either oats or perennial rye grass as a cover crop. Oats tend to attract black bears so perennial rye grass should be used if a clearing is primarily intended for other species. An average of 56 kg/ha (50 lb./acre) of seed mix was used for these projects. The mixtures provide a nutritious, palatable and high energy food source that greens up early in the spring.

In southern Ontario, open areas like these may need to be mowed or cut every couple of years to maintain rich growth of herbs and to reduce potential competition of woody plants. In North Bay District, we may have to re-treat the sites to fill in gaps to maintain the openings.

The variety of wildlife species now found in and around the clearings, is clear proof of the success of these projects. Tim Toeppner, President of the Commanda and Area Hunters and Anglers, sums it up for the volunteers when he says, "These CWIP projects have been great for our club. They have enabled our members to feel that they have really helped out. We can go back to the areas every year and see what we have accomplished and take pride in the achievement."

## Ontario's Duck Nesting Box Survey

by Rosa Rihimaki  
Long Point Bird Observatory  
and  
Mark Stabb  
Regional Extension Biologist  
Algoma Region

Next to maintaining bird feeders, building nest boxes is probably the most popular wildlife conservation project in North America. Boxes for purple martins, bluebirds and wood ducks are most often built. Purple Martins in eastern North America now nest almost exclusively in martin "houses". Bluebird populations are rebounding, in part due to nest box projects. And the wood duck is definitely one of the most popular species being catered to by today's conservation carpenters.

Wood ducks were in danger of disappearing early in the 20th century due, in part, to intensive hunting pressure. Hunting restrictions helped populations increase to the point where wood duck numbers then became limited by the availability of nesting sites. Widespread destruction of bottomland hardwoods and forest clearing reduced numbers of large trees with cavities for wood duck nesting. Nest boxes then became almost a cure-all to bring back the woodies across the continent.

But are they? Harry Lumsden, retired Ministry of Natural Resources biologist, conducted a provincial survey of duck nest box use from

1961 to 1973. Only 7.6 per cent of more than 4,000 boxes checked were used by ducks. Since then, thousands more nest boxes have been erected, with varying degrees of maintenance and monitoring.

Harry's survey suggests a number of questions. What are the current rates of use in Ontario? Is the time and effort placed on duck nest box projects worthwhile? Do other wildlife species benefit from the placement of duck nest boxes and to what degree?

Over the years, various organizations have been established to monitor the success of bluebird and martin nest box projects on a large scale. However, no similar scheme has been implemented to monitor duck nest boxes. Now the Long Point Bird Observatory and the Ministry of Natural Resources are co-sponsoring an investigation into the use of duck nest boxes in Ontario.

The Environmental Youth Corps has sponsored a staff position in Wildlife Branch to develop the survey. The objectives are to study the use of large nest boxes by cavity-nesting wildlife and to improve the effectiveness of nest boxes. The data that we gather will be compared to Canadian Wildlife Service information about wood ducks nesting in natural cavities to see how effectively nest boxes are contributing to wood duck conservation. We also hope to obtain enough information to allow us to assess population trends.

We have created an information package that will be provided to all volunteer participants. It includes the survey form, a field guide to nest-box checking, and a background document on the nest box conservation project. Volunteers building duck boxes with the support of MNR's Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP) will be core participants, as will naturalist clubs, game and fish clubs, conservation authorities, and other groups. Wood ducks, hooded mergansers, flying squirrels, screech owls and kestrels are all expected to turn up in the survey.

Unfortunately, the 1990 survey will be sent to participants after the duck nesting season. Information may not be available for many boxes.

Nevertheless, we hope that people who are currently monitoring their boxes will give us as much information as they can. We are eager for as many people as possible to participate.

To get on the mailing list for the free information package, please contact Rosa Rihimaki  
Duck Nesting-Box Project Biologist  
Wildlife Branch  
Ministry of Natural Resources  
99 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1W3  
or call (416) 965-4252.

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The CWIP Newsletter

Vol 3, #3 Published by the  
Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch  
Copies of this publication are available in French

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Printed in Ontario, Canada

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# Deer Have a Friend in Wolford Township

by Jeff Bending  
Deputy Conservation Officer  
Fish and Wildlife Technician  
Brookville District

■ Ontario's white-tailed deer herds have grown dramatically in recent years. With increased deer numbers has come concern about the sustainability of herds and pressures on deer habitat.

Randy Johnston is a landowner who cares about wildlife, particularly white-tailed deer. Randy is one of a growing number of landowners taking an active role in deer conservation. He owns 109 ha (270 acres) of land in Wolford Township of Grenville County. The property is adjacent to Brockville District's most heavily used deer winter range. Randy approached district staff to find out how to improve wildlife habitat on his property. Working with MNR, a comprehensive multi-year habitat management plan was developed for the property. Randy's plan calls for clearing one acre (0.4 ha) patches in his woods while he is cutting firewood in the winter. The branches are used to make brush piles to improve cover for cottontail rabbits and other small animals. The openings created allow new growth of tender young shrubs and herbs for deer to browse.

Randy has pruned apple trees, remnants of the farm that once operated on the property and planted 43 new apple trees to provide prized fall forage for deer.

In addition to the work sponsored by CWIP, Randy planted buckwheat and corn this spring. He will leave these crops unharvested to create an additional winter food source which, at the base of buckwheat, will be self-regenerating. Together all these activities will create forage plots that should lure some of the herd out of the nearby wintering area, easing the strain that high deer numbers place on natural browse. Each food plot will also serve as an "ace in the hole" in the event of a bad winter.

The wetland on the property was also included in the management plan and will be managed by Ducks Unlimited in the future.

Randy Johnston has demonstrated stewardship through his concern and work for wildlife. We all owe him thanks for his cooperation, planning and efforts to provide badly needed winter forage in the heaviest deer winter concentration area in Brockville District.

projects. The ministry provides technical expertise and funding support for equipment and materials needed to get the job done. The following is just one example of a program participant.

Willem van der Mark is a rural landowner in the village of Grassie, Ontario, just south of Grimsby. He has tackled two successful CWIP projects. His 10 ha (25 acres) property borders on a woodlot and contains a low marshy area, old fields, low grass and a pond. He first became involved in CWIP in 1988 and with the help of naturalists, scouts, students from the CollegeStreet Public School in Smithville, and even a member of the Ontario Bluebird Society, enhanced his diverse property for wildlife. The volunteers planted trees and shrubs to make hedgerows, developed a forage plot for deer, and built nesting structures for waterfowl and cavity-nesting birds.

Willem has made a commitment to wildlife conservation by incorporating his interests into a habitat plan for his property. In it he outlines his goals for habitat improvements and maps out his ideas for future work. He employs techniques through CWIP and on his own.

# The Habitat Plan (Technical Tip)

## S-T-E-P #3

Prescribe habitat improvements or restoration. Which areas will be maintained in crop land, pasture, forest cover or marsh? When will habitat be restored by planning or managing vegetation? Stage habitat diversity be enhanced? Stage activities over several years to allow for progressive work, evaluation and re-evaluation of the project.

## S-T-E-P #4

Identify your material needs, link up with community volunteers and develop your CWIP application.

Designing a habitat plan can be an interesting and enjoyable exercise that will set the stage for habitat conservation projects for years to come. You may not even need CWIP support to do the work. Often the work can be done with existing materials or resources. For a free information package on habitat plans and habitat improvement techniques, write to the

Wildlife Branch  
Ministry of Natural Resources  
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# Habitat Matters: The Community Wildlife Involvement Program

■ Stewards of natural areas are invariably stewards of wildlife habitat too. Farm fields with nest boxes are graced with bluebirds.

Snakes patrol for rodents where there is sufficient cover. Flying squirrels glide through woodlots where dead trees with cavities are left intact as nest sites.

By linking habitat concerns with land management, landowners maintain healthy and diverse ecosystems. The Ministry of Natural Resources applauds the habitat conservation practices of private landowners, and offers support for such initiatives through the Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP).

Through CWIP, private landowners are working with families, neighbours, clubs and community groups to undertake habitat enhancement, restoration and management

■ Planning is the key to a successful conservation project. And a habitat management plan is necessary for many CWIP projects to be undertaken on private land. In approving CWIP projects, MNR staff seek a commitment from private landowners to long-term planning and maintenance of habitat projects to ensure benefits to wildlife and the public.

A habitat management plan is your blueprint for a diverse and ecologically fruitful rural property. You are the architect. In consultation with MNR staff or local conservation groups, you lay out plans to conserve and manage wildlife habitat, considering your own needs and objectives or, if you are not the owner, the needs of the owners. Here are some basic steps:

## S-T-E-P #1

Conduct a simple site inventory of present land use and existing habitat features. Which lands are under cultivation? How much is woodland? Are there any wetlands or waterways? Draw these on a map.

## S-T-E-P #2

Identify the goals you or the landowner have for appropriate parcels of the site. What can you reasonably expect to attract or conserve on the chunk of land? How does it relate to the current land uses and to the surrounding landscape?

Local MNR staff from the district office in Fonthill provided Willem with guidance on habitat enhancement techniques, and funding for the plants and building materials. They also helped him make connections with community groups. By enlisting the participation of other individuals and groups Willem has helped many others get involved in wildlife conservation. Private landowners preparing work on their properties must develop a multi-year habitat plan prior to project approval, and must also link up with community volunteers.

Birds, mammals, other fauna and many types of flora are both products and beneficiaries of a healthy rural landscape. You can help maintain these wildlife populations through the Community Wildlife Involvement Program. To find out how to get involved in CWIP, contact your local district office of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

One of the easiest things a landowner can do to attract wildlife, Willem says, is to leave or erect a dead tree on the land. "Everybody cuts down dead trees," he laments. "By putting them back up you attract all kinds of birds." Woodpeckers feed on the bugs in them, while hawks and owls use them as perches for hunting. Other birds passing by can drop down for a rest or to scan the surroundings. Erecting a wildlife roost tree, like many simple conservation techniques, requires a little know-how but no financial support. You can learn about projects like this by talking with MNR staff, or looking through their CWIP Manual.

## Terns nest successfully on Sparrow Lake

Evan Thomas  
Fish and Wildlife Supervisor  
Bracebridge District

■ Attempts by community groups to restore common tern nesting colony on Sparrow Lake met with resounding success in the spring of

1989. Over 30 adult birds and 18 nests were spotted on the traditional Long Island nesting grounds. This is up from just 15 terns and two unsuccessful nesting attempts in 1988.

Common terns are small gull-like birds that are recognized by their white body colour, black skull cap, red bill tipped with black, and

red feet. Although common terns are observed throughout the Great Lakes and the Trent-Severn Waterway, the Sparrow Lake population is the only known nesting colony of the birds in Muskoka. During peak years in the 1960s over 25 nests were present on Long Island.

In 1988 groups such as the Muskoka Field Naturalists, Sparrow Lake Association, and the Town of Gravenhurst brought the problem of dwindling tern numbers to the attention of the Ministry of Natural Resources. A loose coalition was formed in an attempt to rebuild the colony. To solicit public support and reduce the growing level of human disturbance on the island, an information sign was posted and a zoning by-law was passed designating the island a "protection area".

Despite these good intentions the sign was knocked down and burned as firewood and the small island received continued recreational use throughout the nesting period. Consequently the two remaining pairs of adult terns abandoned nesting efforts entirely.

In the spring of 1989, the Field Naturalists received a Community Wildlife Involvement

Program (CWIP) grant from the MNR to erect two "No Trespassing" signs, with project information, on the Crown-owned island. Activity was prohibited from April 1 until July 20 - the terns' nesting season. These more direct signs were accompanied by stronger communication links with the cottagers of Sparrow Lake.

Councillor Sylvia Purdon and club president Dave Wright were delighted to observe that complete public co-operation was received and the birds were left to nest undisturbed. "At least 15 fledglings were raised from the 45 eggs laid in 1989," says Purdon. "This goes beyond any level of success we had imagined. We can only hope that this trend will continue and that the terns have truly become established on the lake again."



< Common terns on Long Island Sparrow Lake













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